

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for treating pathologies characterized by an accumulation of extracellular matrix in a tissue, comprising contacting said tissue with an agent which suppresses the extracellular matrix producing activity of TGF- β .
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said agent is anti-TGF- β antibody.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said agent is PDGF.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said agent is an Arg-Gly-Asp-containing peptide.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said pathologies are selected from the group consisting of glomerulonephritis, adult respiratory distress syndrome and cirrhosis of the liver.
6. A method of inhibiting the accumulation of extracellular matrix in a tissue, comprising suppressing the activity of TGF- β in the tissue.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein suppressing the activity of TGF- β comprises contacting the tissue with anti-TGF- β antibodies.
8. The method of claim 6 wherein said agent is PDGF.
9. The method of claim 6 wherein said agent is a Arg-Gly-Asp-containing peptide.
10. The method of claim 6 wherein said tissue is comprised of cells selected from the group consisting of kidney, lung, liver and skin cells.

11. A method of detecting the presence of pathologies of a tissue characterized by an excessive accumulation of extracellular matrix components, comprising determining the level of TGF- β in said tissue and comparing the level of 5 TGF- β in said tissue to the level of TGF- β in normal tissues, an elevated level of TGF- β said tissue being indicative of such pathologies.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said pathologies are selected from the group consisting of glomerulonephritis, adult respiratory distress syndrome and cirrhosis of the liver.

13. A method of decreasing the production of a proteoglycan by a cell which produces a proteoglycan comprising decreasing the amount or inhibiting the activity of TGF- β to which said cell is exposed.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein said cell is a mesangial cell.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein said proteoglycan is selected from the group consisting of biglycan and decorin.

16. An antibody which inhibits the proteoglycan stimulating activity of TGF- β having an affinity of about 10^8 or greater and a titer of about 1:30,000 or greater as measured by radio immunoassay.

17. The antibody of claim 16, produced by immunizing an animal with a linear peptide from TGF- β .

18. A cell which produces the antibody of claim 16.